

REMARKS

The rejection of claims 20 – 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is respectfully traversed.

Applicant claims a macroporous ceramic in which the macropores have substantially uniform diameter, exemplified, as stated in claim 4, by a maximum pore size difference of 20%. Van 'T Veen et al., on the other hand, disclose a composite in which a porous layer is used as support for a microporous layer. Tellingly, Van 'T Veen et al. are not at all concerned with providing a macroporous layer in which the pores have substantially uniform diameter, but are only concerned with providing a microporous structure with uniform diameter pores. On the contrary, Van 'T Veen et al. recognize the problem that ceramics having pores larger than micro-size are defective. Thus the reference describes macroporous ceramic materials only as suitable as a micro filtration support in that it normally exhibits structural irregularities which prevent the formation of a uniform high performance microfilter (column 1, lines 29-33). Their description, for example in their claim 1, and also in their drawings, of a porous support having pore sizes between 0.1 μm and 50 μm , leads away from Applicants' claimed structure of a macroporous ceramic having pores that are substantially uniform diameter uniformly dispersed therein. This has nothing to do with overlapping ranges as the Examiner suggests. It has to do with uniformity in a macroporous ceramic structure.

The reference actually supports the novelty of a ceramic having uniformly dispersed macropores of uniform diameter. While recognizing the problems that Van 'T Veen et al. says plague ceramic material with pores larger than micropores, rather than deal with the problem, they accept it and compensate for it by overlaying the large pore ceramic material with a micropore ceramic material having uniform micropore diameters. Applicants, on the other hand, directly dealt with the problem and created, for the first time, a macroporous ceramic having pores of substantially uniform diameter uniformly dispersed therein. The further limitation of the range of 0.5 μm to 5 μm is simply to define the macroporous nature of the ceramic material. Therefore, any overlap with the Van 'T Veen et al. large pore ceramic material is irrelevant. The distinction is in the ability to provide a ceramic material having uniformly dispersed macropores of uniform diameter, something Van 'T Veen et al. do not do or teach how to do.

Applicants submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of any fees required associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0337. If an extension of time is required, please consider this a petition therefore and charge any additional fees which may be required to Deposit Account No. 50-0337. A duplicate copy of this paper is enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,

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